

# **TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR INCLUSION**

**Policy Mapping Grid: Iceland**



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Further information about the Teacher Professional Learning for Inclusion (TPL4I) activities is available on the [TPL4I web area](#).

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## SECTION 1: WIDER POLICY CONTEXT

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### Wider policy context

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in Iceland is responsible for implementing legislation related to all school levels, from pre-primary and compulsory education, through to upper-secondary and higher education. It also includes continuing and adult education. The Ministry's responsibilities include creating curriculum guides for pre-primary, compulsory and upper-secondary schools, issuing regulations and planning educational reforms. The Minister of Education, Science and Culture grants accreditation to higher education institutions (HEIs) that fulfil national and international criteria. The Quality Board for Icelandic Higher Education has issued a Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF). It includes elements on reviews at institutional and subject levels, as well as continuing and additional accreditation of HEIs.

While municipalities are responsible for pre-primary and compulsory education, central government is responsible for the operation of upper-secondary schools and HEIs. Education in Iceland has traditionally been provided by the public sector. However, a certain number of private institutions are in operation today, primarily at the pre-primary, upper-secondary and higher education levels.

Further information on the structure of [Iceland's education system](#) is available.

(European Agency, Country information for Iceland, [Legislation and policy](#))



## SECTION 2: VISION AND MAIN PRINCIPLES OF TPL4I POLICY

### 2.1 Policy vision

Policy priorities	Findings
<p>2.1.1 Policy is guided by a vision that all teachers (i.e. student teachers, beginning teachers, experienced teachers, teacher educators) can access career-long professional learning opportunities regarding the principles of inclusive education</p>	<p>2.1.1.1</p> <p><i>There is no single comprehensive legislation that applies to the professional development of teachers and their further education. Provisions concerning in-service training for pre-primary, compulsory and upper secondary teachers are in their wage-contracts, in laws and regulations for individual teacher education institutions and in central legislations on individual school levels. (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Iceland, <a href="#">Continuing Professional Development for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education</a>)</i></p> <p>2.1.1.2</p> <p><i>Continuous professional development of Compulsory school teachers and Upper secondary school teachers is part of their contracts on salaries and working conditions. CPD is option in negotiations of municipalities and their pre-primary school teachers. (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Iceland, <a href="#">Continuing Professional Development for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education</a>)</i></p> <p>2.1.1.3</p> <p>Iceland has <a href="#">new legislation</a> on teacher qualifications. It states that a teacher’s committee shall be established, which decides on policy regarding the professional development of teachers and their further education. (The text is only available in Icelandic.)</p>



Policy priorities	Findings
2.1.2 Policy is guided by a vision that all teachers receive education regarding their role and collaboration in and contribution to inclusive education	2.1.2.1 The Policy for Special Education in Reykjavik states: 'Teachers will have access to trained assistants (pair educators) to help them with pupils with disabilities and pupils in need of additional support.' (European Agency, Country information for Iceland, <a href="#">Systems of support and specialist provision</a> )
2.1.3 Policy is guided by a vision that all teachers receive education regarding their pedagogical responsibility to promote the interaction, learning, participation and collaboration of all learners	–

#### Evaluative comments for 'Policy vision'

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## 2.2 Main principles

Policy priorities	Findings
2.2.1 Teachers' professional learning is defined in policy as a prerequisite for inclusive education	–



Policy priorities	Findings
2.2.2 Policy states that the principles and practice of inclusive education should be part of initial teacher education	–
2.2.3 Policy states that beginning teachers should receive appropriate education and support to enable them to acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills for inclusive education	<p>2.2.3.1</p> <p><i>Formal structures phase of support to new teachers after finishing initial teacher education is not customary. Some municipalities and some secondary schools, though, provide such support for novice teachers informally. The support may consist of formal/informal meetings to discuss progress or problem areas, advice, information and informal feed-back, assistance in lesson planning and pupil appraisal. In some cases, new entrants teach less than other teachers during their first year of teaching. (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Iceland, <a href="#">Conditions of Service for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education</a>).</i></p> <p>2.2.3.2</p> <p>The Icelandic Ministry of Education and Science has published a <a href="#">new report</a> on teachers' further education policy. The <a href="#">new legislation</a> on education also states what qualifications teachers should have at each school level. (These texts are only available in Icelandic.)</p>
2.2.4 Policy ensures that experienced teachers receive appropriate education and support to enable them to acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills for inclusive education	–



Policy priorities	Findings
<p>2.2.5 Policy states that specialist teachers and other professionals (e.g. speech and language therapists, multilingual education teachers and other professionals who work in schools) receive appropriate education and support to enable them to acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills for inclusive education</p>	<p>2.2.5.1</p> <p>Approximately five per cent of teachers employed at compulsory schools are trained as special educators. However, due to a shortage of special educators, many schools hire regular teachers on a temporary basis. (European Agency, Country information for Iceland, <a href="#">Teacher education for inclusive education</a>)</p>
<p>2.2.6 Policy states that teacher educators working in university education departments or pedagogical institutes should be trained and committed to the inclusive education agenda in their courses, as understood in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the European Disability Strategy</p>	<p>2.2.6.1</p> <p><i>Minimum educational requirements for Teacher Educators at university institutions are the same as for academic teachers in general in Iceland. According to the Higher Education Institution Act ... they shall have at least completed a master's degree or have equivalent knowledge and experience as reviewed by the evaluation committee. Furthermore, they shall have demonstrated sufficient achievement in their work to enjoy recognition in the respective field of study. ... The same minimum qualifications apply to Teacher Educators working in programs preparing student teachers for Pre-primary schools, Compulsory schools and Upper secondary schools.</i> (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Iceland, <a href="#">Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education</a>)</p> <p>2.2.6.2</p> <p>'There are no formal requirements for field based Teacher Educators or supervisors of student teachers in schools.' (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Iceland, <a href="#">Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education</a>)</p>





### Evaluative comments for 'Main principles'

See 2.2.5.1, which states that approximately five per cent of teachers employed at compulsory schools are trained as special educators. However, due to a shortage of special educators, many schools hire regular teachers on a temporary basis. (European Agency, Country information for Iceland, [Teacher education for inclusive education](#))

Also see 3.1.1.3, which quotes: 'Program for teachers in special education has been provided since 1974 and is currently offered as elective line of study at master's level at the School of education at the University of Iceland.' (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Iceland, [Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education](#))

Currently, no alternative pathways are foreseen in initial teacher education to respond to a teacher shortage or create shortcuts for teacher education. However, there are 'considerations of developing alternative pathways to counteract the foreseen decrease in the number of teachers within the next few years, which is a matter of grave concern.' (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Iceland, [Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education](#))



## SECTION 3: GOALS AND CONTINUUM OF SUPPORT FOR TPL4I POLICY

### 3.1 Goals

Policy priorities	Findings
<p>3.1.1 Policy states that all teachers should have qualifications that reflect an inclusive education agenda</p>	<p>3.1.1.1</p> <p><i>There are no compulsory core subjects of teacher education defined centrally. Each teacher education institution sets curriculum guidelines for study lines in initial teacher education and determines content areas, competences and learning outcomes. The way in which teacher education is organised, theoretical studies and teaching practice arranged, differs between institutions and the various lines of study as well. (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Iceland, <a href="#">Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education</a>)</i></p> <p>3.1.1.2</p> <p><i>The programmes on General teacher education for Compulsory school consist basically of educational theory and teaching skills, theoretical foundation for education, didactics, methodology and information technology. In the undergraduate programme student teachers specialize in two elective fields, 80 ECTS (i.e. 40 ECTS in each field). Elective fields are school subjects and cross curricular educational fields, like early childhood education. Student practice is vital part of the professional studies. The final thesis is 10 ECTS in students' field of interest.</i></p> <p><i>In the general, teacher education student who are going to be Pre-primary school teachers consists basically of educational theory, especially methodology of early childhood education. They specialize in pedagogics of subject fields, educational research and human</i></p>



Policy priorities	Findings
	<p><i>communication. Student practice is vital part of the professional studies. The final thesis is 10 ECTS in students' field of interest.</i></p> <p><i>Student teachers in Pre-primary school education can choose special subjects in their study (60 ECTS) which can give them permission to teach in the first 3 classes in Compulsory schools. In the same way can Compulsory teachers have permission to teach in Pre-primary school if they specialize in early childhood education (60 ECTS). (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Iceland, <a href="#">Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education</a>)</i></p> <p>3.1.1.3</p> <p>For all teachers, a master's degree is required.</p> <p><i>Icelandic legislation requires a 180-credit bachelor's degree and a 120-credit 5 master's degree to be issued with a licence to teach in preschool, compulsory school and secondary school.</i></p> <p><i>For Pre-primary teacher's certificate a minimum of 150 ECTS in education studies are required and min. 90 ECST in subject fields related to Pre-primary school curriculum</i></p> <p><i>For Compulsory teacher's certificate a minimum of 120 ECTS in education studies are required and min. 120 ECST in subject fields related to primary or secondary curriculum:</i></p> <p><i>For Upper secondary teacher's certificate, a minimum of 60 ECTS in education studies are required and min. 180 ECST in a subject field related to primary or secondary curriculum.</i></p> <p><i>Academic programmes and education for teachers in Arts or in Sport and Health Sciences are similarly organized and students graduate with a Master's degree.</i></p>



Policy priorities	Findings
	<p><i>Vocational teachers' educational requirements include 60 credit units in Teacher Certification Studies in addition to a final diploma in vocational field; such as qualification as Master craftsman in a trade.</i></p> <p><i>Program for teachers in special education has been provided since 1974 and is currently offered as elective line of study at master's level at the School of education at the University of Iceland.</i></p> <p><i>Practical field work in initial teacher's education takes place in educational institutions at the respective level.</i></p> <p><i>... Regulation on the content of teacher education, nr. 872/2009, outlines further requirements for categories of teachers. (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Iceland, <a href="#">Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education</a>)</i></p> <p>3.1.1.4</p> <p>Since 2008, a five-year master's degree is required to become a teacher in Iceland, to improve leadership and professional capabilities of teachers, administrators and all those involved in education. (European Agency, Country information for Iceland, <a href="#">Teacher education for inclusive education</a>)</p> <p>3.1.1.5</p> <p>'Titles of teachers at Compulsory and Upper secondary level respectively are protected as licensed professions and the same goes for teaching at Pre-primary level.' (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Iceland, <a href="#">Teachers and educational staff</a>)</p>



Policy priorities	Findings
	<p>3.1.1.6</p> <p>‘Vocational teachers’ educational requirements include 60 credit units in Teacher Certification Studies in addition to a final diploma in vocational field ...’ (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Iceland, <a href="#">Teachers and educational staff</a>)</p> <p>3.1.1.7</p> <p><i>Continuing professional development of teachers and head teachers is proposed in laws and arranged in accordance with wage agreement. Usually Upper secondary school teachers have min. 80 hours/year for professional development. Compulsory school teachers have 170-90 hours/year, but Pre-school teacher have not a set number of hours for their professional development.</i> (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Iceland, <a href="#">Teachers and educational staff</a>)</p>
3.1.2 Policy states competence areas for inclusive education for all teachers working at different levels of education (e.g. professional development of all teachers to facilitate their involvement in co-teaching, planning together, developing differentiated materials collaboratively, etc.)	–



Policy priorities	Findings
<p>3.1.3 Policy states that all teachers' professional learning opportunities consider teacher competences for inclusive education</p>	<p>–</p>
<p>3.1.4 There is a formal strategy for promoting dialogue between ministries, regional/local authorities/municipalities and teacher educators to agree on the requirements of teachers' professional development opportunities for inclusion</p>	<p>3.1.4.1</p> <p><i><a href="#">The Council of Continuous Professional Development of Teachers</a> was established by the Icelandic Ministry of Education, Science and Culture in 2013. It is led by the ministry, with strong representation from the Icelandic Association of Local Authorities and various stakeholders of the educational system. (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Iceland, <a href="#">Continuing Professional Development for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education</a>)</i></p>
<p>3.1.5 There is a mechanism to ensure that all professional learning opportunities available to teachers are aligned with national- and local-level policy goals for an understanding of inclusive education</p>	<p>3.1.5.1</p> <p>The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education's External Audit of the Icelandic System for Inclusive Education put forth recommendations in a <a href="#">final report</a>, which are being implemented.</p>



Policy priorities	Findings
<p>3.1.6 There are strategies to ensure that local-level professional opportunities for teachers are flexible/adaptable to local school contexts and school development plans for inclusive education</p>	<p>3.1.6.1</p> <p><i>According to the Pre-school Act, Compulsory School Act and Upper-secondary School Act, each school is obliged to produce a working guide which is based on the National Curriculum Guides, but gives the school an opportunity to take its circumstances and special characteristics into account. The working guide is an administrative plan for each school. ... This includes how it is going to meet learners' special needs.</i> (European Agency, Country information for Iceland, <a href="#">Legislation and policy</a>)</p> <p>3.1.6.2</p> <p><i>Educational authorities, at state level and municipal level, have adopted the policy of encouraging teachers themselves to bring about innovations and initiate developmental and in-service training projects. Individual Pre-primary schools, Compulsory schools and Upper secondary schools are required by law to develop local professional development schemes for teachers. In-service training projects are often initiated by the associations of teachers of a given subject and in some cases by local education offices.</i> (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Iceland, <a href="#">Continuing Professional Development for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education</a>)</p>
<p>3.1.7 There is a medium- and long-term review strategy for teachers' professional learning opportunities to ensure they meet system requirements for an inclusive education system</p>	<p>–</p>



## Evaluative comments for 'Goals'

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## 3.2 Continuum of support

Policy priorities	Findings
<p>3.2.1 There is a strategy to ensure a continuum of diverse professional learning opportunities for inclusive education – for pre-service, beginning and experienced teachers, as well as teacher educators and support teachers – across all levels where teachers work</p>	<p>3.2.1.1 A five-year master's degree is required to become a teacher. Undergraduate programmes last three years (bachelor's degree). The two-year master's programme is offered as an in-service programme for practicing teachers. (European Agency, Country information for Iceland, <a href="#">Teacher education for inclusive education</a>)</p> <p>3.2.1.2 Three universities in Iceland currently provide formal courses towards a teacher's certificate, in accordance with legal requirements for the recruitment of teachers and head teachers in pre-primary school, compulsory school and upper secondary school. The institutions offer concurrent as well as consecutive teacher education courses, allowing working teachers to get a master's degree.</p> <p>'The masters programs are most often structured as a fulltime study, although part time studies are possible.' (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Iceland, <a href="#">Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education</a>)</p>





Policy priorities	Findings
	<p>3.2.1.3</p> <p>All of the universities:</p> <p><i>run internet based instruction and in the <a href="#">University of Iceland</a> and the <a href="#">University of Akureyri</a> student teachers have the option to finish teacher education in distance mode; either partially or completely. ... Most courses are structured so that students can take them in distance education. They are based on on-site sessions and afternoon/evening teaching, as well as computer- and internet communication. Afternoon/evening lectures can be broadcast online but other courses are only campus-based. (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Iceland, <a href="#">Initial Education for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education</a>)</i></p> <p>3.2.1.4</p> <p>‘Emphasis has been placed on making it possible for teachers to have access to in-service training or further education. Teacher education institutions offer such programmes.’ (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Iceland, <a href="#">Continuing Professional Development for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education</a>)</p>
3.2.2 There are strategies for developing leadership competences (e.g. school leadership or learning support leadership roles) for inclusive education in all relevant professional learning opportunities	<p>3.2.2.1</p> <p>The regulation on municipality professional services to local pre-primary and compulsory schools and on learner protection councils in primary schools aims to provide professional services that are:</p> <p><i>... aimed at promoting schools as professional organisations that can solve most of the challenges that arise in schools and provide the school staff with guidance and assistance to their work as appropriate. (European Agency, Country information for Iceland, <a href="#">Legislation and policy</a>)</i></p>



Policy priorities	Findings
3.2.3 There are mechanisms to support schools/higher education institutions to develop strategic plans for teachers' professional learning in inclusive education	3.2.3.1 The European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education's External Audit of the Icelandic System for Inclusive Education put forth recommendations in a <a href="#">final report</a> , which are being implemented.  Two new reports are now available (only in Icelandic), following up on one of the critical levers suggested in the audit report. The critical lever was a recommendation to initiate a debate among stakeholders on what inclusive education should look like in practice. The Minister of Education, Science and Culture in Iceland invited all stakeholders to participate in such debate in over 40 meetings all over Iceland in the autumn of 2018. See report A for the findings of the meetings and report B for the Ministers' remarks on report A.
3.2.4 There are strategies to support effective collaboration and joint work between schools and higher education institutions/universities	–

**Evaluative comments for 'Continuum of support'**

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## SECTION 4: CAPACITY BUILDING, FUNDING AND MONITORING OF TPL4I POLICY

### 4.1 Capacity building

Policy priorities	Findings
4.1.1 There are strategies to increase the capacity of all schools/higher education institutions to support all teachers to engage in professional learning activities on inclusive education	–
4.1.2 There is a mechanism to facilitate dialogue between all teachers/leaders/other stakeholders to develop a shared understanding of inclusive education as an approach that ensures high-quality learning opportunities for all	–
4.1.3 There is guidance on how teachers working in mainstream school settings/higher education institutions can understand and enact inclusive education	–



Policy priorities	Findings
4.1.4 There are guidelines that support all teachers to collaborate to support all learners	4.1.4.1 ‘There are no special formal support measures for teachers in schools, but it is determined locally by municipalities and individual schools.’ (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Iceland, <a href="#">Conditions of Service for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education</a> )
4.1.5 There are guidelines on how methods of quality assessment, school evaluation, inspections and other accountability measures contribute to planning/identifying priority areas of professional learning activities for inclusive education	4.1.5.1 The <a href="#">Directorate of Education</a> in Iceland sets guidelines on quality assessment and school evaluation, inspections and other accountability measures.
4.1.6 There are strategies to support schools/higher education institutions to build strong leadership teams that are aware of the inclusive education agenda	–



Policy priorities	Findings
4.1.7 There are incentives stated in policy for all teachers to engage in professional learning activities for inclusive education	<p>4.1.7.1</p> <p><i>Upper secondary school teachers are entitled at least 80 hours/year for independent professional development. Compulsory school teachers have up to 150 hours/year independent professional development. Pre-primary school teachers have also access to professional development as part of their position; it is though not quantified. (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Iceland, <a href="#">Conditions of Service for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education</a>)</i></p> <p>4.1.7.2</p> <p><i>According to laws on compulsory and upper secondary education there are provisions on sabbaticals for teachers. Teachers must apply for leave of absence to the respective authorities. There are comparable provisions in the wage-contract between the municipalities and the <a href="#">Association of Pre-primary School Teachers</a>. (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Iceland, <a href="#">Continuing Professional Development for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education</a>)</i></p>
4.1.8 There are strategies stated in policy to develop the role of specialist teachers as a resource for mainstream schools	–



Policy priorities	Findings
4.1.9 There are strategies to promote professional learning for inclusion in teachers' common competence areas (e.g. experienced teachers and specialist teachers are expected to engage in professional learning activities that promote inclusive education pedagogies, such as co-teaching)	–
4.1.10 There are competences for professional learning in inclusive education for all teachers	–

**Evaluative comments for 'Capacity building'**

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## 4.2 Funding

Policy priorities	Findings
4.2.1 There are financial incentives to encourage all schools/higher education institutions to develop policy and action plans for teachers' professional learning for inclusion	4.2.1.1 <i>The universities in Iceland offer varied professional development courses for teachers. There are various funds that support schools based on applications to strengthen school development and support in-service training for teachers. The Teachers' Union also has funds to support teachers' professional development.</i> (European Agency, Country information for Iceland, <a href="#">Teacher education for inclusive education</a> )
4.2.2 There are mechanisms for systematic data collection on expenditure on teachers' professional learning that informs cost-effectiveness issues	–
4.2.3 There are flexible resourcing mechanisms that foster teachers' professional learning at school level	–

### Evaluative comments for 'Funding'

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### 4.3 Monitoring

Policy priorities	Country information
4.3.1 There is a comprehensive accountability framework for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of teachers' professional learning for inclusion activities	–
4.3.2 Monitoring mechanisms ensure that inequalities in access to professional learning opportunities at regional or organisational levels are addressed	–
4.3.3 There are mechanisms to support schools/teacher education departments/higher education institutions to have ownership of review and improvement processes in relation to teachers' professional learning	–





Policy priorities	Country information
4.3.4 There are mechanisms to share and analyse data to inform improvement processes in relation to teachers' professional learning at national and local level	–
4.3.5 There is data available on whether teachers are engaged in professional learning that is relevant to the level of education they teach	4.3.5.1 Statistics Iceland collects, processes and disseminates data on the economy and society. This includes statistics on the educational system. See Eurydice, <a href="#">National Education Systems, Iceland</a> .
4.3.6 There are mechanisms to ensure that teachers' professional learning contributes to improving inclusive education practice at school level/the level of a teacher education department or higher education institution	–



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### Evaluative comments for 'Monitoring'

*Currently there is no formal planning policy on teachers supply and demand. At the horizon, such planning policy is needed as supply of teachers is not meeting demand, especially as the teacher population ages and graduating classes of teachers are smaller than the annual group of retiring teachers. (Eurydice, National Education Systems, Iceland, [Conditions of Service for Teachers Working in Early Childhood and School Education](#))*